

Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., today said, "True to his word, the ostrich stuck his head in the sand and after five-and-one-half years issued his first presidential `veto' - the veto of a very moderate stem cell research bill supported by leading scientists, biomedical researchers, patient advocacy groups, religious and major health organizations. If signed into law it would have allowed increased funding for new promising stem cell research that could possibly treat such diseases as diabetes, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, Lou Gehrig's disease, multiple sclerosis, cancer and spinal cord injuries. Not even Nancy Reagan, with the memory of her late husband in mind, could persuade Bush otherwise.

"The law would have allowed use of stem cell lines *only* from surplus embryos that are otherwise slated for destruction by fertility clinics, not the more promising field of research known as therapeutic or research cloning. Even the conservative Senate Majority Leader, Bill Frist, a medical doctor, said, `Embryonic stem cells uniquely hold specific promise...that adult stem cells cannot provide.'

"The bill passed both houses of Congress with large majorities, though short of the two-thirds majorities needed to override a presidential veto in the House and Senate. Today the House failed to override the veto, making any future vote by the Senate merely symbolic. President Bush's politics means he prefers trying to motivate his conservative religious base for the November midterm elections with a veto, rather than possibly saving lives trying to advance biomedical research by signing a stem cell research bill into law.

"The American people must focus on President Bush's actions because of its importance - and should not be diverted by Hezbollah or Hamas, Lebanon or Gaza. President Bush's first veto is unscientific, based on immature and un-sound religious thought, is unintelligent and anti-biomedical scientific progress. The President has just dashed the best hope for finding potential cures for debilitating and deadly diseases. He has put his unsound conservative religious ideology over sound religious thought and good science. His irrational and unscientific veto should be embarrassing - even to schoolchildren.

On May 24, 2005, the House passed HR 810, the Castle-DeGette Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, by a vote of 238 to 194, with 187 Democrats, 50 Republicans and 1 Independent voting YES. Yesterday, the Senate voted for it by 63 to 37 - with 44 Democrats, 18 Republicans and 1 Independent voting YES," Jackson concluded.